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INDIANA  
COUNTY COURTHOUSES  
of the  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

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## INDIANA COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The title of this presentation might be more accurately called "Hoosier Hysteria in the Nineteenth Century." Of the ninety-two counties in Indiana, all built at least two, and several as many as five, courthouses in a span of less than ninety years.

Thus, keen competition developed between towns in the hope that each would be selected as the county seat, since it was felt that being selected would insure rapid growth and prosperity. (This was, however, not always the case.)

The courthouse quickly became the symbol of the county: politically, socially, and architecturally. Distances and directions in the county were measured or given with the courthouse as the bench mark or reference point. Rivalry between counties was often equally spirited.

This competition between cities can be readily traced to the rivalry between cities in the late Gothic and Renaissance periods. Numerous comparisons can be made between:

14th and 15th centuries	vs.	19th century
Secularism (Humanism)		
New towns		
Increased trade and new trade routes (materialism)		
Greater security		
Increased wealth		

Architectural comparisons between the periods are equally meaningful:

14th and 15th centuries	vs.	19th century
City Halls		Courthouses

Both became tangible architectural symbols of the skills and aspirations of the historic periods for which they were designed.

Sometimes they defined a space:

Siena (Plate 1)	Bluffton (Plate 2)
Palazzo Publico	Wells County Courthouse
1297-1310	1888-1890

Sometimes they were defined by a space:

Muncie (Plate 42)	La Porte
Delaware County Courthouse	La Porte County Court-
1885-1887	house
	1892

Were an important silhouette:

Siena (Plate 3)	Decatur (Plate 4)
Palazzo Publico	Adams County Court-
1297-1310	house
	1872

Or offered an excellent view of the city:

Venice	Muncie
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In the nineteenth century, architecture became a Battle of Styles: Classical, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Eclecticism (Renaissance, Second Empire, Victorian elements).

In the Midwest, the use of other systems was necessary.

Wayne County was organized in 1810 and Salisbury, which is no longer marked on maps of Indiana, was selected as the county seat. It was the first town laid out in the county, which was at the time completely forested. Salisbury was sited south of U.S. 40 about midway between Centerville and Richmond,<sup>1</sup> and the *First Courthouse in Wayne County* was built in 1811 (Plate 5) at Salisbury. The first trial was held within the partially raised building on October 28, 1811.

The two-story building, 31 feet long and 25 feet wide, was heated by a large fireplace at the first floor. The building was constructed of squared logs, hand-hewn. Spaces, if any, between timbers were chinked with a clay mortar. Corner joints were half dove-tailed and windows were shuttered. The same system of construction had been used during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by English colonists to build blockhouses and jails. It proved to be an excellent system but one that required considerable skill and numerous tools.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Hedges, Centerville High School History Club (sheet).

This may well account for the fact that the First Wayne County Courthouse is still standing today. William Commons, who came to the county in 1810, was the builder.

Later a second courthouse of brick construction was built at Salisbury; however, an accurate description and exact date have not yet been uncovered. In 1816 the Indiana legislature passed an act stating that after August 1, 1817, all official business was to be transacted in Centerville. After bitter strife between the citizens of the two communities, the seat of county government was transferred to Centerville.

The town of Salisbury found little use for two vacant courthouses, and the hand-hewn log structure was auctioned off to the highest bidder. The owner dismantled the structure and moved the elements to Richmond where it was reassembled to function as a residence. Apparently no changes were made in the rebuilding of the original fabric, although later modifications completely concealed the original structure, but the significance of the courthouse-residence was not forgotten.

"In 1952, a contractor dismantled the courthouse-residence in Richmond. Interested citizens came forward to save the original log building and it was again purchased at auction. Since the town of Salisbury had long since disappeared, the owners decided to reconstruct it at Centerville, the county's second seat of justice. The venerable structure now stands on school property in Centerville south of the National Road."<sup>2</sup>

To my knowledge it is the oldest extant courthouse in Indiana and certainly one of the oldest, if not the oldest, in the Northwest Territory. The number of counties in Indiana that built log or hand-hewn courthouses are too numerous to mention, and all have long since disappeared. From the verbal descriptions and drawings that remain, the Wayne County example was one of the largest to employ this system of construction and certainly one of the most sturdy. It is more than a symbol of the frontier spirit. It is expressive of an indigenous concept of construction and design with emphasis on organic simplicity.

The *Third Wayne County Courthouse*, 1818, the first in Centerville, was built by William Commons, the builder of the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Indiana Historical Society Bulletin*, August, 1961.



first courthouse at Salisbury, and although it was a modest structure, it was the model for the Second Delaware County Courthouse.

"On the third day of June, 1872, a petition was drawn up and signed by 4,937 persons and presented to the Board of Commissioners of Wayne County, asking for the removal of the county seat from Centerville to Richmond."<sup>3</sup> Only after bitter debate and strife was the seat of justice moved to Richmond on August 15, 1873.

The *Fourth Wayne County Courthouse*, completed August 4, 1873, was the first to be built in Richmond (Plate 6). An expression of the Italianate Style, it was a simple, well-proportioned brick structure with square-headed windows and doors spanned by flat stone arches. Paired brackets defined the continuous eave of a low-pitched, hipped roof which was terminated by an open cupola. The Italianate Style was widely exploited in America from ca. 1850 through the 1870's for both residential and public buildings. Indiana has a large number of well-preserved residences and several existing courthouses built in the Italianate Style. The *Jennings County Courthouse* at Vernon, 1859 (Plate 7), and the *Morgan County Courthouse* at Martinsville, 1857, both by Isaac Hodgson,<sup>4</sup> are quite similar in design. Both are more expressive of the picturesque asymmetrical compositions that became the hallmark of the style than the symmetrical, less ostentatious Wayne County example.

Architects' and builders' handbooks played a most important role in the dissemination of a design vocabulary based upon the Late Gothic and Early Renaissance styles of Italy—a vocabulary that was often referred to by Europeans as an American vernacular or indigenous expression of architecture. The architect of the Fourth Wayne County Courthouse, the first in Richmond, was George Hoover; the builder, Thomas W. Roberts. The cost of the construction was \$22,700.<sup>5</sup> The structure was demolished sometime after the completion of the present courthouse.

The present or *Fifth Wayne County Courthouse*, the second at Richmond, 1889-1892, by James W. McLaughlin, architect (Plate 8), is an expression of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

<sup>3</sup> Illustrated Atlas of Indiana, 1876, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> Hodgson also designed the Henry County Courthouse at New Castle, 1866; the Bartholomew County Courthouse at Columbus, 1871; and the Marion County Courthouse, Indianapolis, 1869-1876, demolished in 1960.

<sup>5</sup> Illustrated Atlas of Indiana, 1876, p. 295.



Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) has been rightfully referred to as the father of modern architecture in the United States. Indeed, it would be all but impossible to name a contemporary of his who had an equal impact on the development of modern architecture. He was the initial link on the chain: Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank L. Wright.

Richardson's physique was gargantuan; he had architecture in his bones. He was robust, dynamic, virile, and possessed a titanic imagination. These qualities were ever present in his architecture.<sup>6</sup>

As an architect, Richardson placed considerable emphasis on a wall bearing structural system (Plate 9). Thus, the walls were laid up of massive rough-faced masonry units, usually of a local stone which tended to have a rich polychrome or succulent quality.

His design sources were manifold. He exploited low springing arches and grouped openings that expressed interior spatial functions; this was in sharp contrast to the staccato window fenestration of classically inspired academic solutions used by most of his contemporaries. The low springing arches were previously found in Syrian examples of the fifth and sixth centuries.

Silhouettes of towers and details were similar to French and Spanish Romanesque solutions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Richardson was an eclectic, but in a most positive way. He used the history of architecture to formulate a personal and extremely imaginative expression that has been termed a "true American Style."

It was little wonder that his design solutions made a strong impact on the younger generation of nineteenth-century architects. An impression of similar significance has been experienced in the twentieth century in the influence of Mies van der Rohe, LeCorbusier, and others.

Numerous comparisons can be vividly seen between the courthouses of Indiana and their Richardsonian precedents.

Many of the details of the present Wayne County Courthouse are similar to, or were inspired by, the Albany City Hall, 1880-1882, and the *Allegheny County Courthouse* in Pittsburgh, 1884-1887, by H. H. Richardson (Plate 9):

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ames Gate Lodge, North Easton, Mass., 1880-1881.

Massive bearing walls of rough-faced stone terminated vertically by a hipped roof with a single stone-faced dormer and longitudinally by semicircular tourelles. (Compare Plate 8 and Plate 9.)

Windows of a variety of sizes are grouped to form functional horizontal bands along with small punched rectangular openings at the base.

Low springing arches of local rough-faced stone are used in both solutions.

Let us quickly experience other Hoosier courthouses that reflect similar design characteristics.

The *Blackford County Courthouse* at Hartford City, 1893-1894, is a massive Richardsonian Romanesque expression (Plate 10) sited on an ample square, the façade being the south elevation. The tower is asymmetrically superimposed on an otherwise symmetrical composition.

Again several comparisons can be made between the Blackford County Courthouse and the Allegheny County Courthouse:

The towers are similar in silhouette (compare Plate 10 and Plate 11), and both exploit blind arcading with slit openings and tourelles to define the corners. Both examples have boldly projecting paired towers running the full height of the massive walls (compare Plate 12 and Plate 9). These paired massive semicircular towers became a hallmark of Indiana County Courthouses.

The Blackford County Courthouse has been well maintained, functions quite well today, and continues to be the architectural symbol of the county.

La Belle and French Architects of Marion, Indiana, were the designers of the Blackford County building which was completed in 1894.

Bert L. French (1868-1940) was born in Urbana, Ohio, and served his architectural apprenticeship in the office of Elah, Terrel and Company in Springfield, Ohio, from 1887 to 1889. In 1891 a partnership was established with Arthur La Belle (1855-?).

Mr. La Belle was born in Plattsburg, New York, and journeyed to Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1884, where he stayed for two years. He arrived in Marion ca. 1888. Arthur La Belle is an enigma similar

to the majority of architects who practiced in Indiana during the nineteenth century; information on these individuals remains tantalizingly scanty.

The partnership of La Belle and French was very productive. They designed at least two additional courthouses: the *White County Courthouse* at Monticello, Indiana, (1894) and the *Trumbull County Courthouse* at Warren, Ohio. The firm also designed a large number of schools, churches, and commercial buildings in Indiana.

The *Starke County Courthouse* at Knox, 1897 (Plate 13), by the architectural firm of Wing and Mahurin of Fort Wayne is sited on a large square with the façade orientated to the south. Originally the major commercial activity of the town defined three sides of the square (W,S,E,) but this activity has largely shifted a block south of the courthouse square. The courthouse is basically classical in plan and form; however, the exterior is again Richardsonian Romanesque. It is a well-proportioned and finely detailed structure.

The *Hancock County Courthouse* at Greenfield, 1896, also by Wing and Mahurin, is another variation of the Richardsonian Romanesque design theme (Plate 14), although the hierarchy or system is less lucid. The massing of the corner units, their gable and mansarded roof elements, and the applied dormers are more reminiscent of French Renaissance and Gothic solutions than Richardsonian Romanesque.

Even the bold, projecting semicircular towers flanking the main entrance (north elevation) have a Renaissance character due to the strong horizontal banding and rectangular headed openings. Note the contrast between the Renaissance inspired arch and string course versus the Gothic tower.

Indeed, the overall organization and resulting silhouette of the *Hancock County Courthouse* (Plate 14) are similar to the *Fulton County Courthouse* at Rochester, 1895 (Plate 15), by A. W. Rush and Son. The Hancock County example is more monumental due to the elasticized or elongated and chunky vertical axis. However, the Fulton County Courthouse is a clearer, more lucid statement of the Romanesque vocabulary due to the greater emphasis on rusticated planes and simple massing versus applied ornamentation. The incised organic ornament at the main entrance of the Fulton

County example is quite rich and most finely carved (Plate 16). The lion is curious. Both examples express considerable imagination and are without question the most significant architectural symbols in their counties.

The *Decatur County Courthouse* at Greensburg, 1854-1860 (Plate 17), by Edwin May is one of the most unique of all the Indiana County Courthouses and certainly one of the most widely known county courthouses in the United States.

The original or first Decatur County Courthouse, completed in 1827, was a modest 40 by 40 feet two-story brick building terminated by a cupola. By 1854 the building proved inadequate; it was condemned and torn down to make way for the present structure.

Edwin May was employed by the Decatur County Commissioners to design the present structure. He was then only twenty-nine years old, but he had already designed courthouses in Sullivan and Shelby counties. He later designed at least four additional Hoosier County Courthouses and the present State Capitol Building, although he died almost a decade prior to its completion.

Edwin May (1824-1880), George W. Bunting (1829-1901), and Isaac Hodgson (1826- ? ) were architects of the generation of the 1820's. The triumvirate had offices in Indianapolis, and all made a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of Indiana.

Mr. May, born in Boston in 1824, journeyed *ca.* 1838 to Madison, Indiana, a city even then with a large number of finely proportioned and well-detailed Georgian, Federal, and Classical Revival public buildings and residences. Madison was to Indiana in the nineteenth century what Columbus is in the twentieth century—an architectural oasis. Although his stay in Madison was relatively short, the architecture of the community made an indelible impression on Mr. May.

In 1842 Edwin May went to Indianapolis where he worked as a carpenter and builder for eight years. Although he had no formal architectural training, he must have had a keen mind and considerable knowledge of financing, for he operated a loan office that might well have assisted him in remaining financially solvent as an architect and builder. The operation of a loan office is a most unique and imaginative enterprise for an architect, and I know of no precedent.





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1. Siena, Palazzo Pubblico, 1297-1310, general view
2. Bluffton, Wells County Courthouse, 1888-1890, George W. Bunting & Son, view from northwest
3. Siena, Palazzo Pubblico, 1297-1310, silhouette
4. Decatur, Adams County Courthouse, 1872, J. C. Johnson, east elevation
5. Centerville (orig. site, Salisbury), First Wayne County Courthouse, 1811, William Commons, builder, general view from southeast
6. Richmond, Fourth Wayne County Courthouse, 1873, George Hoover, photograph from the Indiana Historical Society Library

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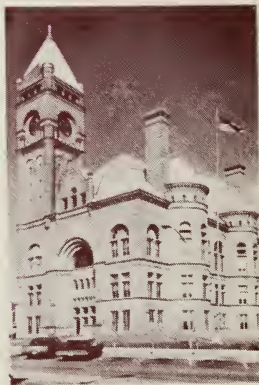
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7. Vernon, Jennings County Courthouse, 1859, Isaac Hodgson, view from northwest
8. Richmond, Fifth Wayne County Courthouse, 1889-1892, James McLaughlin, view of west elevation
9. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Allegheny County Courthouse, 1884-1887, H. H. Richardson, view from southwest
10. Hartford City, Blackford County Courthouse, 1893-1894, La Belle & French, view of south elevation
11. Pittsburgh, Allegheny County Courthouse, 1884-1887, H. H. Richardson, view of tower from west
12. Hartford City, Blackford County Courthouse, 1893-1894, La Belle & French, view of east elevation



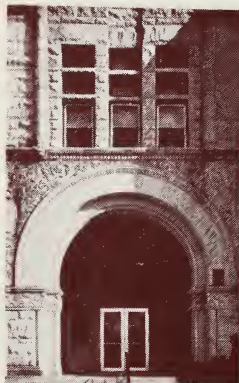
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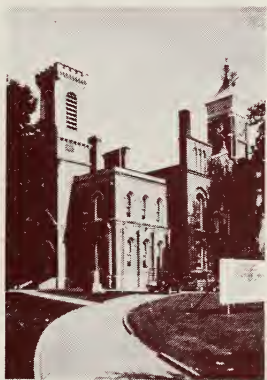
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13. Knox, Starke County Courthouse, 1897, Wing & Mahurin, east elevation
14. Greenfield, Hancock County Courthouse, 1896, Wing & Mahurin, view from northwest
15. Rochester, Fulton County Courthouse, 1895, A. W. Rush & Son, view from southwest
16. Rochester, Fulton County Courthouse, 1895, A. W. Rush & Son, main entrance
17. Greensburg, Decatur County Courthouse, 1854-1860, Edwin May, view from southwest
18. Greensburg, Decatur County Courthouse, 1854-1860, Edwin May





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19. Noblesville, Hamilton County Courthouse, 1878, Edwin May, view from southwest  
 20. Rising Sun, Ohio County Courthouse, 1845  
 21. Madison, Jefferson County Courthouse, ca. 1848, David Dubach, façade: west elevation  
 22. Vevay, Switzerland County Courthouse, ca. 1850, view: façade  
 23. Madison, Jefferson County Courthouse, ca. 1848, David Dubach, dome  
 24. Vevay, Switzerland County Courthouse, ca. 1850, dome



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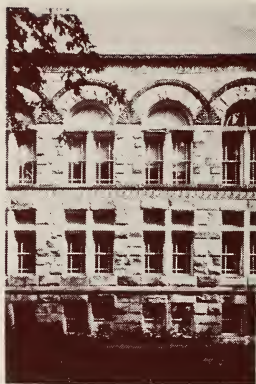


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25. Paoli, Orange County Courthouse, 1847-1850, façade: south elevation
26. South Bend, St. Joseph County Courthouse, 1854, John Mills Van Osdel, view: façade
27. Plymouth, Marshall County Courthouse, 1870, Gurdon P. Randall, view from southwest
28. Boston, State House, 1795-1808, Charles Bulfinch, view: façade
29. Philadelphia, Girard College, 1833-1837, Thomas U. Walter, view of south elevation
30. Bluffton, Wells County Courthouse, 1889-1890, George W. Bunting & Son, interior: courtroom



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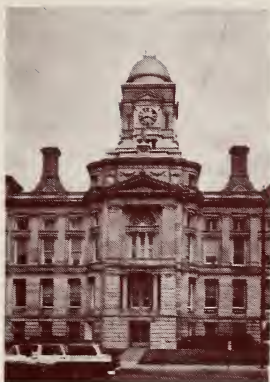
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- 31. Liberty, Union County Courthouse, 1890, George W. Bunting & Son, view from northwest
- 32. Liberty, Union County Courthouse, 1890, George W. Bunting & Son, view of west elevation
- 33. Franklin, Johnson County Courthouse, 1881-1882, George W. Bunting, south elevation
- 34. Franklin, Johnson County Courthouse, 1881-1882, George W. Bunting
- 35. Frankfort, Clinton County Courthouse, 1882, George W. Bunting, west elevation
- 36. Anderson, Madison County Courthouse, 1882, George W. Bunting





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37. Frankfort, Clinton County Courthouse, 1882, George W. Bunting, detail: west elevation  
 38. Anderson, Madison County Courthouse, 1882, George W. Bunting  
 39. La Grange, La Grange County Courthouse, 1878-1879, Thomas J. Tolan & Son, view: west elevation  
 40. Rockville, Parke County Courthouse, 1879-1880, Thomas J. Tolan & Son, view from northeast  
 41. Warsaw, Kosciusko County Courthouse, 1882, Thomas J. Tolan & Son, view from southwest  
 42. Muncie, Delaware County Courthouse, 1885-1887, Brentwood S. Tolan, view from southwest



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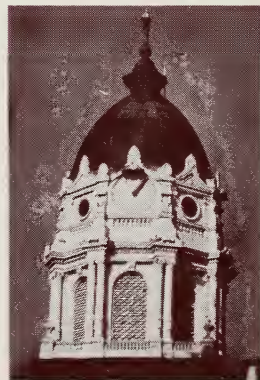
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43. Warsaw, Kosciusko County Courthouse, 1882, Thomas J. Tolan & Son, view of south elevation  
 44. Muncie, Delaware County Courthouse, 1885-1887, Brentwood S. Tolan, view of south elevation  
 45. Warsaw, Kosciusko County Courthouse, 1882, Thomas J. Tolan & Son, south (main entrance)  
 46. Muncie, Delaware County Courthouse, 1885-1887, Brentwood S. Tolan, south (main entrance)  
 47. Muncie, Delaware County Courthouse, 1885-1887, Brentwood S. Tolan, west stair  
 48. Muncie, Delaware County Courthouse, 1885-1887, Brentwood S. Tolan, dome

Although the present Decatur County Courthouse was started in 1854, it was not completed until 1860. It is an interesting and curious solution, asymmetrical in plan and picturesque and rambling in silhouette, but suggestive of the Gothic idiom. Conversely, the semicircular arches are more indicative of Romanesque expressions, but the Richardsonian idiom was not prevalent until much later (1870 and after). Thus, it is possible that Edwin May was familiar with the then current work of James Renwick and his solution for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington (1847-1855).

In 1903 the exterior brickwork was stuccoed to emulate a more permanent material, stone.

The courthouse has been eulogized on numerous occasions for various reasons. While on a speaking tour in 1908, William Jennings Bryan stated that Decatur County's Courthouse was the finest specimen of Gothic architecture that he had seen in his travels throughout the world.<sup>7</sup>

William Allen White, the eminent Kansas journalist known as the Sage of Emporia, used the tree of the Decatur County Courthouse as the subject for one of his editorials (Plate 18). He expressed curiosity as to the "secret of the grove of trees on the high tower between stones whereas on the plains of Kansas one was fortunate to grow a single tree on the ground."<sup>8</sup> White's comments were printed in many papers throughout the country and he even visited the site several years later while on a trip to the East.

The local chamber of commerce refers to the tree as the "Eighth Wonder of the World." Some have accused the chamber of commerce of "planting" the tree which caused a local wit to say, "and it's watered by the springs of the clock." Indeed, the fire department has watered the trees during severe periods of drought. It is uncertain how the tree got to the apex of the 115-foot high tower or when the tree was first seen; possibly a bird or even the wind carried a seed to the tower. Various dates have been given for the sighting of the first tree, ranging from ca. 1865 to 1870.

The present tree is the twelfth in the series of large-tooth aspen which have brought considerable publicity to the Decatur County Courthouse, but the trees seem to have clouded the architectural significance of the building.

<sup>7</sup> *Greensburg Daily News*, Thursday, August 18, 1966, page 1, section 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Greensburg Daily News*, Thursday, August 18, 1966, page 1, section 4.



The *Hamilton County Courthouse* at Noblesville, 1878, also by Edwin May (Plate 19), is in sharp contrast to the Decatur County example. It is one of the most lucid expressions of the Classical French Renaissance mode to have been constructed in the Midwest during the nineteenth century and is reminiscent of French examples of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in form, materials, and details. The banded columns are an expression of the "French Order" devised and exploited by Philibert de l'Orme in the sixteenth century.

One of the most interesting series of Indiana courthouses was the classically inspired solutions which began to appear in the southern part of the state after ca. 1845. The Classical Revival was to have a longer life in the United States than any other country in the world, with the possible exception of Russia.

The Greek Revival became an American architectural ideal because of our romantic association with ancient Greek arts, politics, and cultural perfection. Indeed, the modern Greeks gained the sympathy of a new nation, the United States, with their struggle for freedom against the Turks in the war of 1821-1827.

The style which became a fashion was used for the design and/or remodeling of all building types except factories, barns, and privies.

Temple-front wooden porticoes in standard heights could be purchased from local mills; however, some needed additional sections to reach an already established cornice height, and the results were not always successful.

Similar fortuitous systems have occurred in the twentieth century:

Dutch doors of aluminum for residences designed in any style.

Portholes Kits (Buick) for Chevrolets.

Cadillac tail fins for Chevrolets.

Edward Stone sun screens for the N elevation.

Asbestos siding to simulate stone.

One of the earliest and now the oldest Greek Revival Courthouse in Indiana to be continuously occupied is the *Ohio County Courthouse* at Rising Sun, 1845 (Plate 20). The architect is uncertain. It was probably inspired by the Greek Revival portico which was added to the George Washington Custis House (later Robert E. Lee) at Arlington, Virginia, ca. 1820-1826 by George Hadfield. The columns were copied from an unfinished Greek Classical Temple



where the volutes had not been cut into the column shafts. It was archaeologically inaccurate, but the result was a new expression and one that was to be widely emulated.

This archaeological inaccuracy is the key to the significance of the Greek Revival Period in America. It was rarely an exact copy of Greek Classical examples, but rather an imaginative assimilation of forms for the solution of new building types. Great emphasis was placed on developing new structural systems that would result in fire-resistant construction and hence greater permanency.

The solutions expressed restraint, simplicity, and monumentality even if the building were modest in size, such as the courthouse at Rising Sun.

A strong similarity can be seen between the *Jefferson County Courthouse* at Madison, ca. 1848 by David Dubach (Plate 21), and the *Switzerland County Courthouse* at nearby Vevay (Plate 22).

The Jefferson County example was the precedent. The porticoes of both examples are similar: high bases with pierced arches supporting four slender columns. The orders and the proportions of the pediments are dissimilar. The Ionic order was employed on the Jefferson County example and the Corinthian was used on the Switzerland County solution. The angle of the raking cornice of the Switzerland County solution is a more accurate use of the classical element.

It is possible that the façade of the State House at Boston (Plate 28), 1795-1808, by Charles Bulfinch was the precedent for both solutions.

Other similarities between the Hoosier solutions are quite obvious: bay system, window fenestration, and scale. Indeed, the domes are identical except for minute details in the proportions of the cupolas (Plate 23 and Plate 24).

One of the most finely proportioned and detailed Greek Revival examples in Indiana is the *Orange County Courthouse* at Paoli, 1847-1850 (Plate 25). The architect is unknown. It is grandly sited on a gently sloping square defined by low commercial facilities at the periphery.

Behind the Greek Doric hexastyle portico, two open iron stairways rise from the main floor to the courtroom at the second floor. A similar stair system is employed to gain access from the finished

grade to the first or main floor. Both stairways are defined by ornamental cast iron panels. The Paoli example is a very restrained, sophisticated, and monumental solution.

Another interesting example in the classical vocabulary is the *St. Joseph County Courthouse* at South Bend, 1854, by John Mills Van Osdel (1811-1891), the first architect to practice in Chicago and one of the first to practice in the Midwest. Fortunately, when a new courthouse was built in 1897, the old structure was moved to a new site and is now used as the headquarters of the Northern Indiana Historical Society (Plate 26).

Numerous other Indiana County Courthouses were built in the Classical Revival Style, several by the eminent Hoosier architect, John Elder. However, most if not all have been replaced by more recent constructions.

The *Marshall County Courthouse* at Plymouth, 1870, by Gurdon P. Randall (? -1884), (Plate 27), is unique in that it is not located in the business district but is sited on an ample square defined on all sides by a fine group of residences.

Mr. Randall was born in Vermont and studied under the eminent eastern architect, Asher Benjamin (1773-1845). Although Benjamin designed numerous buildings, his publications were of far greater importance since they established a high standard of design "that had a strong influence down to the Civil War."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Randall lived in Chicago for thirty-four years where he became a well-known architect. He designed a number of courthouses, several located in distant states.

The *Marshall County Courthouse* is an imaginative emulation of the works of James Gibbs and Robert Adam, two of the most distinguished architects of the eighteenth century. Randall used a raised portico defined by a series of arches in a manner not dissimilar to the system employed by Charles Bulfinch in the design of the State House in Boston (Plate 28), an example that Randall had often experienced while residing in Boston.

George W. Bunting (1829-1901) was without question the most prolific designer of county courthouses to reside in Indiana. He designed a minimum of seven Hoosier examples and others in Kansas (Sedgwick County), Michigan (Washtenaw County), West

<sup>9</sup> Talbot Hamlin, "Greek Revival Architecture in America," Dover Publications Inc., N. Y., 1964 reprint, p. 95.

Virginia (Harrison County), and Tennessee (Montgomery County). The latter group is a testament to his ability to seek out commissions at a great distance from the geographic area of his architectural practice.

Bunting was born in Pennsylvania, the son of a sea captain. He later attended Girard College, a most extraordinary institution. The will of Stephen Girard stated the entire moral and architectural program of the school. It stated that a 20'-0" high wall must be constructed around the site and that no member of the clergy be allowed on the grounds. The main building (Plate 29) was designed by Thomas Ustick Walter in 1833 and completed four years later at a cost of \$2,000,000, an enormous sum for the time. The structural system is fire resistive, the detailing is impeccable, and it is one of the finest monuments of the Greek Revival Style to have been built in the western world.

As a youth Bunting was also apprenticed to the shipbuilder's trade. His exposure to both architectural excellence and shipbuilding did much to prepare him for a career in architecture. He journeyed south and served as a colonel in the First Mississippi Cavalry during the Civil War. He then spent five years in Bloomington, Illinois, where he was engaged in the practice of architecture, prior to establishing an office in Indianapolis.

His son, George W. (the younger), later joined him in the practice of architecture and the firm of George W. Bunting and Son was established ca. 1886. At least two examples by George W. Bunting and Son were executed in the Richardsonian idiom. Both are virile and somewhat brutalistic.

The *Wells County Courthouse* at Bluffton, 1889 (Plate 2), is a brute of a building, with a massive outline and an asymmetrical cantilevered tower that has a polychromed checkerboarded band of stone defining the clock faces, a device often used by Richardson. The rear and side elevations are massive and well scaled. The courtroom is a fine space and has required only minor modifications over the years (Plate 30).

The *Union County Courthouse* at Liberty was built a year later, 1890, and although the façade is more symmetrical than the Bluffton example (Plate 31), the side elevations are bolder in scale and more brutal (Plate 32). The walls are expressed as a skeleton of stone

more open in form than the Bluffton solution with great emphasis on the wall plane juxtaposed to the recessed plane of the windows. The result is a bold three-dimensional expression.

In sharp contrast to the Richardsonian solutions that we have just experienced, George W. Bunting designed several examples in the Eclectic mode that recalled Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, and the then current Second Empire Style.

The *Johnson County Courthouse* at Franklin, 1881-1882 (Plate 33), largely of red brick, is vigorously striped with contrasting white limestone. Other details—dentil blocks, columns, etc.—are picked out in the same light color. Numerous manneristic elements are employed in the solution (Plate 34).

The *Clinton County Courthouse* at Frankfort (Plate 35) and the *Madison County Courthouse* at Anderson (Plate 36) are more than similar. Both were designed by the same architect, George W. Bunting, and were under construction in the same year, 1882.

The only major difference is in the use of materials, stone at Frankfort and red brick with stone trim at Anderson, and that the broad flight of steps is absent in the Frankfort example (Plate 37 and Plate 38). A further similarity can be seen between the window details of the Franklin County and the Madison County examples. Indeed, it is somewhat unique that an architect would use the same set of plans in the same year for two courthouses of identical scale less than seventy miles apart.

The works of two additional architects are of more than passing interest.

Thomas J. Tolan (1831-1883) was from Carrolton, Ohio, and designed numerous buildings in the northwestern part of Ohio. In 1874 he moved with his family to Fort Wayne. With his son, he established the firm of Thomas J. Tolan & Son, Architects, and they specialized in the design of courthouses and jails. At the time of his death in 1883, the elder Tolan was the architect and building supervisor of the *Hamilton County Courthouse* at Chattanooga, Tennessee.

His son, Brentwood S. Tolan (1855-1923), came from Delphos, Ohio. Upon the death of his father (1883), the name of the firm was changed to B. S. Tolan, Architect.



The *La Grange County Courthouse* at La Grange, 1878-1879 (Plate 39), was designed by Thomas J. Tolan; of that we can be almost certain. The building is nobly sited on a forested square with a hitching rail running almost the entire length of the west side of the site for the even now familiar Amish horse-drawn carriages. The courthouse is symmetrical in plan and form with corner pavilions capped by mansarded roofs. A domed unit rises from the center of the composition. The town has changed only slightly over the years; hence, the courthouse dominates the city now as it did almost ninety years ago.

The *Parke County Courthouse* at Rockville, 1879-1880 (Plate 40), by T. J. Tolan & Son, laid the foundation for the design of both the Kosciusko and Delaware County courthouses. Similarities can be seen in all three solutions.

The *Kosciusko County Courthouse* at Warsaw (Plate 41), 1882, by Thomas J. Tolan and the *Delaware County Courthouse* at Muncie (Plate 42), 1885-1887, by Brentwood S. Tolan are similar in outline, form, and detail. It is quite probable that the younger Tolan designed both examples, although thus far this has been impossible to prove. In both examples a central cross axis is expressed as a massive projecting frontispiece which defines the main entrance. The orientation is the same in both solutions.

Through a closer inspection it is obvious that dissimilarities can be experienced (Plate 43 and Plate 44). The Delaware County Courthouse was elasticized vertically; thus, the main entrance (on the south elevation) was at grade level versus the broad flight of stairs used to gain access to the main floor at the Kosciusko County example. Thus, the higher base in the Delaware County Courthouse resulted in a more monumental solution and provided an additional floor of office space above the finished grade level compared to the sunken or basement sequence of spaces in the earlier Kosciusko County Courthouse.

The frontispiece of the Kosciusko County Courthouse is an emulation of the frontispiece of the *Château Maison*, nr. Paris, 1642-1646, by Francois Mansart. A similarity also is evident in the upper area of the frontispiece of both Indiana examples and the French solution.

Indeed, the upper mansarded element of the Delaware County

Courthouse is reminiscent of the south front of the State War and Navy Building (Executive Offices) often referred to as Grant's Pile in Washington, D.C., 1871-1875, by Alfred Mullett, one of the most significant examples of the Second Empire Style in America.

The entrance of the Delaware County Courthouse was of greater girth, it is more positive, it states that this is the main entrance.

The window treatment in both Indiana examples is more than similar. In both examples the domes are similar in that they are both underscaled for their massive blocky bases. The dome of the Delaware County Courthouse is more plastic, is more finely detailed and less stilted.

Numerous other comparisons could be made between these Indiana examples, and there can be little doubt that the Kosciusko solution was the pilot study for the later and now no longer extant Delaware County solution.

Until its demolition in December of 1966, one of the most delightful ways to experience the Delaware County Courthouse was to walk north through the alley (Plate 44), a tight, narrow space, toward the south or main elevation. This same method of approach can be used in experiencing many of the Indiana courthouses. The element of surprise is dramatized, since only a narrow vertical segment of the structure can be experienced until one reaches the courthouse square. Then and only then can the entire structure be experienced. It is a space sequence system that has been often exploited in the history of architecture and one that even now has great importance.

The Delaware County Courthouse was finely detailed, and a monument of more than local significance. Indeed, it is difficult to experience an equally well-detailed and monumental public building in this part of the state. The views or vistas from the dome revealed the grain of the city and offered the finest panorama of the immediate area.

Fortunately, we have the predecessor of the Delaware County Courthouse. The example in Warsaw has been well preserved and continues to function quite well.

Indiana still has one of the finest assemblages of nineteenth-century courthouses in the Midwest, and they vividly express a

variety of architectural concepts. They express the architectural skills and aspirations of America in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, several examples have very recently been demolished, and an ever greater number will crumble under the repeated blows of the wrecker's ball in the future. Indeed, it would be fortuitous to suggest that all of these examples should be preserved and restored. One can only recommend that a more careful analysis of the nineteenth-century county courthouses must be made if we are to retain one of the most significant phases of our heritage. They are tangible and can continue to afford us a rich architectural stimulus and experience for many decades.







